



Runny Nose

SURPRISING FACTS:

Colds can last longer than 2 weeks. Thick yellow or green mucus is normal as your body fights the virus—it doesn't mean you need an antibiotic.

WHAT TO DO:

- Drink more water. Herbal teas and chicken soup are good, too.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve aches. Read the label for a child's dose.
- Use a humidifier and take hot showers to relieve stuffiness.
- Use a decongestant to help thin the mucus. Antihistamines are best for allergies.
- If your nose is red and raw, dab on some petroleum jelly or salve, or use tissues with lotion.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF:

- You have a high fever (104°).
- You have a fever over 100° for more than two or three days.
- You have a hard time breathing.

A runny nose is a normal part of a cold. When cold viruses infect your nose and throat, your body produces clear mucus. The mucus helps wash the viruses out of your nose as your body fights the infection. After two or three days, immune cells that attack the viruses start changing the mucus to a white or yellow color. Bacteria that normally live in your nose also get mixed in with the mucus and can change it to a greenish color.

Colds almost always clear up on their own. There are at least 200 different viruses that can cause a cold. Common symptoms are a runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, dry cough, headache and sore muscles. The average child has six colds a year. Adults have fewer. These viral infections can last a few days or as long as a few weeks. It is important to take care of yourself and get plenty of rest, because a cold can weaken your body. This can lead to other conditions like ear infections, bronchitis, and even bacterial infections.

Antibiotics don't work against viral infections. Antibiotics don't kill viruses, so they won't make a cold or runny nose go away any faster. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you or your child by creating stronger germs. Over-the-counter medicines can help relieve the symptoms of a cold, such as runny nose. Talk with your health care provider about medicines that can help you feel better.

The best way to prevent viral infections is to wash your hands. Viruses are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with soap and warm water will help keep viruses from entering your body. Eat well, get plenty of sleep and exercise to keep your body strong and prevent colds. People who smoke are more likely to get colds, stay sick longer and have other problems, such as bronchitis. Children who are around tobacco smoke are more likely to get colds and have more serious problems, such as asthma.



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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, and Healthwise



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Office of Health Promotion

P.O. Box 47833 Olympia, WA 98504-7833

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